



Australian Federation
of Islamic Councils



AFIC National
Sharia Board

Achieving Unity

Part 2

Achieving Unity, Part 2

In this part of the series, I will explore the numerous verses and *Ahadith* that are often used in the unity discussion and offer an approach to the matter that will in shaa Allah be both in line with the Islamic teachings and effective in fostering an environment that removes barriers to unity.

When we study our religious tradition and the Quranic and Prophetic advice, we see that we are addressed in a variety of ways. At times we are directed to do something, at others we are forbidden from something. We are informed of the past, present and future. We are given glimpses into the realm of the unseen, and what happened prior to our creation as well as what will happen after our death.

We also learn about Allah, our creator, and some of the countless blessings He has bestowed upon us. The following verse is an example of this.

((وَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ لَوْ أَنْفَقْتَ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مَّا أَلَّفْتَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ أَلَّفَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ)) – سورة الأنفال: 63

And He (Allah) brought their hearts together, even if you had spent all that is on earth, you could not have brought their hearts together, but Allah has brought them together, for He is All-Mighty, All-Wise – Al Quran 8:63.

The unity of the Ummah is in the hands of Allah. He brought the hearts of the warring tribes of the Arabs together through Islam. Allah explains to us in this verse that nothing short of this will have brought them together. Even if the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, the most successful and influential person in history, had everything on this earth at his disposal it would not have been enough (to bring their hearts together) without Allah's support.¹

The word used in this verse is *Allafa*, which comes from the word *ulfah*, meaning a bond or familiarity. Allah caused this bond to form through guidance to His path. You will notice some of the Arabic lectures I've assessed for the purpose of this article used this word in their title as an indication that it is the answer to disunity.² Sheikh Said Al Kamaly stated regarding this verse:

¹ In Michael H. Hart's famous publication *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, he accurately placed the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings upon him, at the top of his list.

² See Appendix A for a list of the assessed resources.

"هذه الأمور من الألفة والمحبة وشيوعها وفشوها بين المسلمين هذه من الأمور التي امتن الله بها على المسلمين وربنا سبحانه لا يمتن إلا بعظيم"

"This bond of familiarity and love for one another and its spread between the believers is a matter that Allah reminds us with as His favour over the Muslims, and Allah only reminds of His favour in relation to truly great matters".

So what is the role of the Muslim? Do action-oriented verses and *Ahadith* direct believers to unite? Let's begin with a few important considerations:

Important Considerations

A balanced approach: Balance is an essential part of the approach of the Muslim, and I dedicated an article to this topic in April 2021. We want to avoid the extremes with regards to the matter of unity. Extremes may look like the following:

- "We will never be united"
- "We need to do whatever it takes to achieve unity"
- "There is only one way (my way) to achieve unity"
- "I will never work with that person".

Submission to the divine instruction: This submission is incumbent upon men and women, and across all levels of any hierarchy. This gives us all a very important point of commonality:

((وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَن سَبِيلِهِ ذَلِكُمْ وَصَلَّكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ)) – سورة الأنعام 153.

((And: This is My path, straightforward. So, follow it, and do not follow the (other) ways, lest they should make you deviate from His way. This is what He has enjoined upon you, so that you may be God-conscious)) – Al Quran 6:153.

Assessing the Quranic and Prophetic Guidance

To make this section as comprehensive as possible I have assessed 20 online resources on unity in Islam. The assessed resources can be found in Appendix A. There were 37 verses from the Quran relating either directly or indirectly to the topic of unity. There were 38 *Ahadith* mentioned, this totals 75 mentions.

The verses and *Ahadith* that contain a directive, whether it is compelling, encouraged, discouraged or prohibited, are *khitab taklif* (an instruction or assignment of responsibility). The verses and *ahadith* that do not are considered *khitab wad'* (an informative address). This is sometimes explained as the Address of Allah in relation to causality, conditionality or prevention.

In analysing the 75 verses and *Ahadith* I found that they all fit within the following 5 categories:

1. The Matter Rests with Allah

((بِاللَّهِ الْأَمْرُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْ بَعْدِ)) – سورة الروم 4

With Allah is the Decision, in the past and in the Future

– Al Quran 30:4

This category is very significant. We see a strong emphasis on the matter resting with Allah³, as well as explicit direct commands to worship Allah alone and not associate any partners with Him, and to obey Allah and His Messenger⁴. This is in the first instance humbling and reassuring, and in the second instance draws our focus to what is within our capability: to worship and obey Allah, and to commit wholeheartedly to Islam.

2. Isslaah (reform, mending ties, elevation)

((وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا)) – سورة الحشر 10

and do not allow bitterness into our hearts towards those who believe

– Al Quran 59:10

I found verses which commanded the believers to mend their own ties with their fellow Muslims and mend ties between their fellow Muslims⁵. There were also mentions of general societal reform such as the hadith mentioning the de-escalation of tensions

³ Al Quran 8:63, 30:4, and 60:7

⁴ Al Quran 2:208, 4:36, 4:59, 8:46, and 25:43

⁵ Al Quran 8:1, 49:9, and 49:10

between Muslims by labelling it a remnant of *jahiliyah* (the time of ignorance). There was also reference to the justice pact made by Quraysh to look out for the oppressed in the land.

Finally, there was frequent mention of supplication (du'a) for others⁶. Many of the authors and lecturers stressed the importance of making *du'a* (supplications) for our fellow Muslims and that it promotes the building of ties and dissipation of bitterness between us.

3. One Ummah

((وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُونِ)) – سورة المؤمنون 52

And verily this Ummah (community) of yours is a single Brotherhood, and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore, be mindful of Me – Al Quran 23:52.

40% of the verses and *Ahadith* mentioned belong to this category, and they all revolve around the central points of one community, brotherhood, the sanctity of the Muslim, removing bitterness and building a climate of love, and loving your fellow Muslim in the name of Allah. The Prophet peace and blessings upon him, is reported to have said:

“المسلم أخو المسلم لا يخونه ولا يكذبه ولا يخذله، كل المسلم على المسلم حرام عرضه وماله ودمه، التقوى ههنا، بحسب امرئ من الشر أن يحقر أخاه المسلم”

The Muslim is the brother of his fellow Muslim. He does not deceive him, lie to him or abandon him. Everything belonging to a Muslim is sacred, his honour, his wealth and his blood. Piety is here (and he pointed to his chest). It is evil enough of a person to belittle/ express contempt towards their Muslim brother⁷.

⁶ Al Quran 1:5, 59:10.

⁷ Jami' Al Tirmidhi: The Book of Righteousness and maintaining good relations with family

4. The Source of Division

((مِنَ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ)) – سورة الروم 32
**of the ones who have caused disunity in their religion and become sects, each party
rejoicing in whatever they have - Al Quran 30:32**

For this category there is a warning against the devil who both works to divide and takes advantage of the division⁸, and anyone else who desires to cause division between the people. There is also a reminder of the perils of the time of *jahiliyah* and a distancing from the people who call for division.

A close look at the verses and *Ahadith* that talk about this shows that this is a reference to splitting from the main body of Muslims and is usually manifested as a deviation in matters long understood to hold consensus, a deviation in direction and principles or a physical departure and isolation from the group.

Differences of opinion, scholarly debate and the exchange of advice were not connected to the causing of division. In fact, most speakers and authors made sure to mention the importance of maintaining them.

5. The Divine Directive

((يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ ۚ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا ۚ فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىَٰ أَن تَعْدِلُوا ۚ وَإِن تَلَوَّا أَوْ تَعْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا)) – سورة النساء 135

**O believers! Stand firm for justice as witnesses for Allah even if it is against
yourselves, your parents, or close relatives. Be they rich or poor, Allah is best to
ensure their interests. So do not let your desires cause you to deviate (from justice).
If you distort the testimony or refuse to give it, then (know that) Allah is certainly All-
Aware of what you do – Al Quran 4:135.**

⁸ Al Quran 12:100 and 17:3

This section is more personal and directive. We are given *taklif* (instruction) for 5 matters which directly contribute to building bonds between the Muslims:

1. **We are instructed to stand for justice** even against ourselves and close people, and even when it comes to dealing with people who carry hatred towards us and have harmed us⁹.

2. **We are instructed to act with wisdom and best practice (ihsaan)** in speech and action. Imam Al Ghazali stated:

اعلم أن الألفة ثمرة حسن الخلق، والنفرق ثمرة سوء الخلق، ومهما كان المثمر محمودًا كانت
الثمرة محمودة

Know that *ulfah* (the bond of brotherhood and unity) is the fruit of good character, and division is the fruit of poor character. However good the tree is will reflect in how good the fruit is.

3. **We are instructed to lower our wing for the believers.** Muslims are taught to be allies and supporters of one another, and warned of the consequences if we are not:

((إِلَّا تَفْعَلُوهُ تَكُنْ فِتْنَةٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَفَسَادٌ كَبِيرٌ)) – سورة الأنفال 73

If you do not do so, there shall be discord on the earth, and a great corruption –

Al Quran 8:73

4. **We are instructed to hold firmly to the path of Allah**

((وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا ۗ وَادْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِنْهَا ۗ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ ۗ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ)) – سورة آل عمران 103.

((And hold fast, all of you, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude Allah's favour on you; for you were enemies and He created a bond between your hearts, so that by His Grace, you became brethren; and you were on the brink of the pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make His Signs clear to you: That you may be guided)) – Al Quran 3:103.

⁹ Al Quran 4:135, 5:2, and 5:8.

5. **We are instructed to cooperate in birr and taqwa.** Imam Al Mawardi stated: through taqwa (mindfulness of Allah) you earn the favour of Allah, and through birr (virtue) you earn the favour of the people. Allah says in the Quran:

((وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ)) – سورة المائدة 2

**And cooperate with one another in showing virtue and mindfulness (of God) ,
and do not cooperate with one another in sin and transgression**

– Al Quran 5:2.

The more opportunities we take to cooperate on what is good, the more we see the causes of our disunity dissipate.

Unity As An Outcome

When unity is treated as an outcome, we will see less accusations and othering and will see more inclusion and cooperation. As an outcome people can remain focused on providing a service to all and will be less concerned with whether or not you have signed up to their group and given them your pledge of allegiance. The result is:

- People willingly choose to participate
- Opportunity to nurture relationships
- We learn and benefit from each other
- We find points of commonality
- We begin to address, directly or indirectly, the causes of our division.

We will continue to suffer so long as we see the following in our community groups:

- Hostility towards "the competition"
- Over-protectiveness of territory
- Having hidden agendas and other motives

We need to learn to work together, advise one another and even call out each other's nonsense without it resulting in hatred and enmity. A group is mistaken if they think they have all the answers and that they alone are correct. We should ask ourselves: do we think that Allah will allow us to become united if we are looking to unite on what is wrong? We represent His Deen, and this representation must be accurate. Are we assuming that all cooperation is necessarily good? The above verse tells us otherwise as it forbids us from cooperating in sin and transgression.

When we view unity as an outcome, we learn to earnestly search for what is required; what conditions make for an environment highly conducive to unity. Don't look to the people who talk about unity, or those who try to force people in line. Look to the people whose actions break down barriers and make unity possible.

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Appendix A: Articles and lectures

I assessed 5 English articles, 5 Arabic articles, 5 English lectures and 5 Arabic lectures. Speakers and authors were diverse in origin, spanning 5 continents. They also varied in level of religious knowledge.

Arabic Lectures:

1. وحدة المسلمين، الدكتور محمد راتب النابلسي
The Unity of the Muslims, Dr Muhamad Ratib Al Nabulsi,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHToyT0ObCM>
2. الألفة بين المسلمين، الدكتور يوسف القرضاوي
The coming together between the Muslims, Dr Yusuf Al Qaradawi,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUQwg0SMAP0>
3. وحدة الأمة الإسلامية، الشيخ محمد العريفي
The Unity of the Muslim Ummah, Dr Mohamad Al Arifi,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QC9eJu0e1AM>
4. الألفة بين المسلمين، الشيخ سعيد الكمللي
The bond between the Muslims, Dr Sa'id Al Kamali,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wn1BZrx5-TM>
5. الندوى الكبرى: الألفة في الإسلام
The Great Seminar: The Islamic Bond,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y2t0KqbxDE>

English Lectures

1. **The Importance of Unity in Islam**, Dr Bekim Hasani,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OhBi1FUGMag>
2. **Australian Imams sit to discuss Unity**,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B28BxWCyYAE>
3. **Achieving Unity in Islam**, Mufti Menk,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWOAQiRQUVA>
4. **Ittihad Fil Islam (Unity In Islam)**, Dr Fazlur Rahman Ansari,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yY-rS_C3-Wk
5. **Unity in the Muslim Ummah & The Islamic Brotherhood**, Dr Yasir Qadhi,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9w0LmwoWing>

Arabic Articles

1. أهمية الوحدة بين المسلمين، هيثم جواد الحداد،
The Importance of Unity Between the Muslims, Haitham Jawad Al Haddad,
<https://khutabaa.com/ar/article/أهمية-الوحدة-بين-المسلمين>
2. كلمة العلامة عبدالله بن بيه في مؤتمر (الوحدة الإسلامية.. مخاطر التصنيف والإقصاء) في مكة المكرمة، الشيخ عبد الله بن بيه،
Notes of the Scholar Abdullah Bin Bayyah in the seminar: Islamic Unity and the dangers of classification and exclusion, in Mekkah, Sheikh Abdullah Bin Bayyah,
<http://binbayyah.net/arabic/archives/4134>
3. أسباب الألفة - موسوعة الأخلاق، المشرف العام: علوي بن عبد القادر السقاف
The causes of the Islamic Bond, The compendium on Islamic Manners, Chief supervisor: Alawi bin Abdulqadir Al Saqqaf, <https://dorar.net/akhlaq/103>
4. معالم الوحدة الاجتماعية النبوية في بناء الأمة، الدكتور محمد منصور الهدوي الفلوري
The Signs of the Prophetic Social Cohesion in Building the Ummah, Dr Mohamad Mansour, Al Hadwi, Al Falluri, <https://ar.islamway.net/article/81889>
5. أهمية الوحدة في الإسلام، عبد الله القنوبي
The Importance of Unity in Islam, Abdullah Al Qallubi,
<https://alwatan.com/details/154591>

English Articles

1. **Islamic unity - Islam Question & Answer, Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Ibraaheem Al-Tuwayjri,** <https://islamqa.info/en/answers/12110/islamic-unity>
2. **Importance of Unity in Islam, Human Appeal UK,**
<https://humanappeal.org.uk/news/2018/08/importance-of-unity-in-islam>
3. **Need for Unity in the Islamic World, Faisal Almakura,**
<https://muslimmemo.com/unity-in-the-islamic-world/>
4. **The Quran and Muslim Unity, Mansoor Alam,**
<https://www.islamicity.org/20730/the-quran-and-muslim-unity/>
5. **Unity is Strength,**
[https://www.quranexplorer.com/blog/Education In the Light of Sunnah/Unity is Strength](https://www.quranexplorer.com/blog/Education%20In%20the%20Light%20of%20Sunnah/Unity%20is%20Strength)